



# Trans-European Railway Corridors Creating New Territories: the Spanish Mediterranean Corridor Project

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## ► To cite this version:

Eloïse Libourel. Trans-European Railway Corridors Creating New Territories: the Spanish Mediterranean Corridor Project. World Conference on Transport Research 2013, Jul 2013, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. hal-01226793

**HAL Id: hal-01226793**

**<https://hal-enpc.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01226793>**

Submitted on 10 Nov 2015

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# **TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY CORRIDORS CREATING NEW TERRITORIES: THE SPANISH MEDITERRANEAN CORRIDOR PROJECT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Mediterranean railway corridor is a project of European scale transport infrastructure to be implemented in the Spanish Mediterranean regions in order to improve the interconnection with the French network. At national, regional and even local level, many political, economic and academic stakeholders take a part in the debate around its realisation and they contribute to elaborate a multiple territorialisation according to their singular visions and objectives.

To give evidence of this complex territorialisation, the analysis of stakeholders' discourses and the mapping of their representations of the corridor together with context elements, lead to the production of a series of map hypothesis to be presented to the actors as a basis for interviews and field work. This series of maps displays plural visions of the "corridor territory" that cross the institutional boundaries and force to take into account multi-scalar spatial and even non-spatial dimensions.

*Keywords: Mediterranean railway corridor (MRC), Spain, high-speed rail, territorialisation, stakeholders, local geopolitics, corridors, Trans-European networks of transport (TEN-T), representations*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Mediterranean railway corridor (MRC) is a project anchored in both the Trans-European networks of transport (TEN-T) since 1996 and the Spanish historical and political context since the 1920's. It was revived in the 2000's. Despite this quite long history, it is still an infrastructure project, a virtual object discussed by multiple stakeholders as a structuring axis. The project was indeed appropriated by all kinds of actors at all scales (Spanish government, local and regional institutions, intellectuals, economic actors and lobbies...). They all support the MRC project in order to benefit from it, according to their priorities in terms of economy, policy and attractiveness.

The Mediterranean railway corridor project is held in a double context of political competition between Spanish government, regions and cities (Loyer, 2006; Romero, 2009), and of economical crisis having a strong impact at all levels (Baron, 2010). Despite its cost, it appears as an opportunity to create new economical dynamics and political cooperation along the Mediterranean coast. Competition between Catalonia and Valencia would eventually decrease thanks to this circumstance cooperation, and the coastal axis would be reinforced as a counterweight to Madrid.

Beside its economic and political dimensions, this cooperation has a strong territorializing effect on the corridor, supplying it with a concrete shape by planning actions and political alliances. These aspects of the corridor are nevertheless plural and express different visions of this Mediterranean axis. How is the production of a consensus (Audikana, 2012) on the project creating plural processes of territorialisation? Methodologically speaking, how to represent with geography's tools, this "corridor territory" according to its multiple representations? And what are the spatial forms of such an object?

In order to throw light on the way of emergence of a corridor territory around the Mediterranean railway corridor project, a three phase methodology will be implemented. At the first step, we will focus on a discourse analysis based on public speeches, interviews, medias and advertising. The results of this analysis will be confronted to socio-economic data regarding politics, demography, business and planning operations. This double analysis will lead to the production of a series of maps drawing the different visions of this particular territory, according to the results of the discourse analysis. These maps aim to enlighten the different possibilities of understanding and representing a territorial vision of a future railway axis. The maps could also be used as a support for interviews in an oncoming field work.

We will focus on the analysis of the MRC project through institutional documents (European Commission, 2001, 2005, 2011; Ministerio de Fomento, 2004, 2010, 2012), through the discourses in the medias and interviews (Libourel, 2011), and then through the production of a series of maps in order to make visible stakeholders' representations of the corridor territory. We will finally try to show what could be the impact of the construction of these multiple visions on the previous TEN-T project.

## **MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS GATHERED BY A SINGLE PROJECT**

### **Spanish actors towards a multi-scalar consensus for the Mediterranean corridor**

The project of Mediterranean railway corridor is historically linked to the economic activities of the Spanish Mediterranean coast: in the 1920's the President of the Federation of Orange Export (FEN), Norberto Ferrer, promoted the idea of a freight axis to carry fruits from the regions of Valencia and Murcia towards central European consumer markets (*ABC* journal of Madrid, December 28th, 1927). In the 1930's, the first steps of a railway tourism also appeared on this axis with the railway passenger service between France and Morocco.

But this coastal axis is opposite to a radial organisation held by Madrid to reinforce its dominant position in Spain as a political and economic capital (Bel, 2010; Olmos, 2011).

Thus, the actual relative consensus (Audikana, 2012) about high-speed and especially about the project of Mediterranean corridor, supported by economic stakeholders, regional authorities and Spanish government and included in the latest version of TEN-T (European Commission, 2011) was not self-evident.

According to the analysis of the Spanish daily press (mainly El País and La Vanguardia) since 2010, and to interviews handled with economic, politic and academic representatives in Valencia, Barcelona and Madrid in March 2011 (Libourel, 2011), it is possible to classify the main stakeholders taking part in the debate on the Mediterranean corridor up to their objectives and their vision of the corridor territory.

The definition of “corridor territory” is quite wide, different actors have their own scientific or operational definition. The concept of “corridor” emerged in the 1960’s in the field of spatial analysis and network analysis (Haggett, Chorley, 1969; Kansky, 1963). It was particularly used to describe urban processes linked to the intensification of transit along structuring transportation axis, as shown by C.F.J. Whebell (1969) and B.E. Prentice (1996) in North-American case studies. In the 1990’s and 2000’s, the notion of “transportation corridor” was used in multi-criteria economic analysis and supply and demand models. European case studies appear in the 2000’s in institutional reports of the European Commission and in national scientific productions. The notion seems to have slipped from spatial to economic analysis (Hall, Hesse, 2013), but the reactivation of the concept of transportation corridor in the great European projects could bring it back to a central role for geography.

The definitions of “corridor” as they appear in the state-of-the-art are very interesting because they show the evolution of the concept along the time and through different disciplinary contexts, and its plasticity.

As one of the main questions of this research is to determine what can be the territory of the Mediterranean railway corridor, we adopt a minimal and inclusive definition of this concept for the interpretation of interviews’ results: the “corridor territory” is to be understood as a coherent coalition of interests in a spatial framework.

Table I – Classification of stakeholders according to their vision of the Mediterranean corridor [BARON, LIBOUREL, 2011; LIBOUREL, 2011]

|                      |   | Main objectives   | Freight or passengers   | Vision of the “corridor territory”   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Institutional actors | European Commission                                   | Promoting European networks interconnection and interoperation  | Mix   | - One end of a great trans-European axis<br>- Opportunity of a railway connexion to North Africa       |
|                      | Spanish government (Grupo Fomento : ADIF / RENFE)     | - Completing high-speed network<br>- Improving the connexion to Europe<br>- Improving competitiveness in Europe           | - Passengers as a political goal<br>- Freight as an economical justification                    | - From French border to Algeiras as a maximalist hypothesis,<br>- to Almeria as a mid-term realisation |
|                      | Mediterranean regions (Catalonia and Valencia mainly) | - Euro-regional integration,<br>- connexion of main Spanish harbours,<br>- creation of a south-north axis avoiding Madrid | - Passengers as a political argument and for image reasons,<br>- Freight for economical realism | Integrating Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia regions   |
| Economic actors      | Lobbies (Ferrmed, Business Eumed, AVE)                | - Connecting industries of the Mediterranean regions,<br>- Opening Spanish coast to European market                       | Freight   | - Piece of a project from Casablanca to Saint-Petersburg,<br>- Along the Mediterranean                 |

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|                     |                             |  |  |  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
|                     | CCI                         | Improving the connexion of Spanish Mediterranean industries to European market, despite a great competition between regional industries  | Freight  | Connection of the main cities and harbours as important spots to Europe  |
|                     | Port authorities            | Improving their service to the centre of Europe to become its door on a great world freight axis   | Freight  | Connecting each port to European market  |
| Intellectual actors | Academics                   | - Promoting a Mediterranean great region, with a particular cohesion and identity,<br>- Reinforcing the economical weight of the Mediterranean in Europe, against the domination of Madrid | Freight (only economically profitable project) | Mainly Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia as three culturally coherent regions to be integrated to Europe in a Euro-region perspective |
|                     | Institutes (IIVEE-Euram...) | Combining the different actors and giving the Mediterranean project a structured meaning   | Freight  | A great Euro-region encompassing all territories making sense in a Mediterranean perspective                                       |

This table, by comparing stakeholders' priorities, leads to two principal findings. First, the impact of the main objectives of each actor on his vision of the corridor territory is obvious. National objectives as those of the Government lead to institutional perimeters, whereas European integration or connection and local development objectives lead to non-institutional perimeters, which extension is variable depending on a more or less extensive vision of the corridor.

Second, there is a huge domination of a freight railway axis in the claiming of the different stakeholders, whereas a passenger axis is mainly a demand of the cities. This can be understood because a freight axis would be economically profitable and gathers all economical actors, whereas a passenger high-speed axis would cost much more than its social profitability would make it acceptable (Bel, 2010). But the idea of a high-speed passenger corridor is present in the discourse of the stakeholders as an attractiveness element and as an argument to convince the inhabitants of the opportunity of the corridor. The European gauge tracks of high-speed rail would also improve the connection and interoperability with France.

Even if it's possible to make a difference between economical, political and academic stakeholders according to their priorities and to their visions of the territory, and despite their divergent objectives, they all are involved in the Mediterranean project and cooperating into some debate and proposition task forces, as IIVEE-Euram (Institute Ignasi Villalonga of Economics and Business), an institute which aims to promote a Mediterranean Euro-region (Boira, 2002).

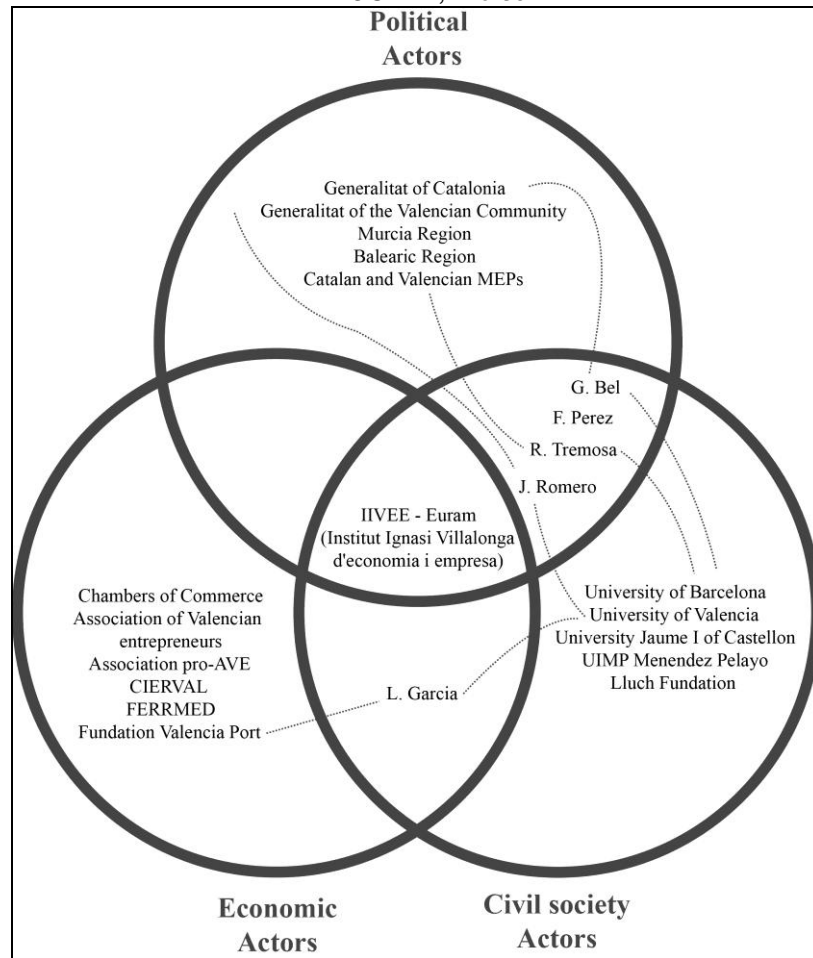


Figure 1 – Circles of stakeholders and convergence of their interests concerning the Mediterranean corridor  
 [BARON, LIBOUREL, 2011]

Despite their different objectives and positions about the modalities of the project, all these stakeholders are part of a great pro-MRC cluster lobby. This scheme shows how actors coming from diverse origins with quite unlike cultures and knowledge participate to a common effort in favour of the Mediterranean corridor.

### **A consensus resulting of very divergent approaches**

The different stakeholders are, according to their prerogatives and objectives, drawing diverse representations of the Mediterranean corridor, both as an infrastructure and as a territory. Generally speaking, their visions are quite close considering that they all include the main Spanish Mediterranean regions and promote a best accessibility for economic reasons. But the vision of the extension of the Mediterranean corridor is quite different.

Several observations can be enlightened. We can first notice that some stakeholders have a restrictive vision, excluding for example Andalusia from the project, for both technical (the coastal mountains are difficult to cross) and political reasons (Andalusia is a historically socio-democratic regions, when Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia have conservative governments), whereas some others have a very inclusive representation of an axis crossing Pyrenees and Gibraltar towards Europe and North Africa.

Second, there is a difference between continuous and discontinuous visions of the territory. The nature of railway infrastructure imposes a discontinuity due to the distance separating the nodes on the infrastructure. This constraint is not equally present in discourses. Economic actors have a network vision of the corridor territory with very few strategic nodes, whereas for the political reasons, the institutional actors attempt to give a continuous representation of the corridor as a coherent territory organised around a new transport axis which would be equally beneficial to everyone.

Third, stakeholders have diverse objectives at the local level and are trying to achieve them by taking benefit from a European scale project. Moreover, political institutions of the Mediterranean regions at all scales are trying to take advantage of the corridor as a factor of attractiveness (Boira, 2004). Cities are engaged in a strong metropolitan competition which takes argument of a nodal position on this new axis (Bellet, Gutiérrez, 2011).

Valencia case study is thus very interesting. The implementation of high-speed rail to Madrid in 2010, which is contradictory with the idea of a Mediterranean corridor excepting the capital, was the occasion for the Mayor and the President of the Community of Valencia to revive Parque Central project of underground railway station and urban renewal (Libourel, 2012). At the same time, Barcelona is building Sagrera underground tunnel for the connection of north and south tracks, together with a new railway hub.

Even if the Mediterranean corridor is supposed to be mainly oriented towards freight for economical profitability purposes, the construction of a “corridor territory”, in a symbolic way, is also being made by the multiplication of urban projects and the query for a metropolitan positive and attractive image.

By the way, all these objectives and actions are strongly linked together and are part of the same dominant discourse in favour of the Mediterranean corridor. This public consensus is the result of a political agreement, but also of the mobilisation of a lexicon of positive and valuable images such as modernity, attractiveness, metropolitan development... Thus, the MRC can be considered as a “boundary object”, up to S. L. Star and J. R. Griesemer (1989) expression often reused in social science (Star, 2010), that is to say an object of mediation between people and institutions which don't work with the same instruments and don't have the same paradigms to understand things. Otherwise, they are brought together around a single object, the Mediterranean corridor, which makes possible a dialog. In the particular case of Spain, it is remarkable that the MRC did oblige political actors at local, regional and national level to go over their reluctances in order to promote a European scale project. At the same time, it brought political, economic and civil society actors together on behalf of the common interest of a Mediterranean corridor.

Therefore, a methodology making these strategies' impacts visible is still to be found out. The discourse analysis is an interesting element, but it doesn't give a satisfactory vision of the different representations of the corridor according to the different stakeholders.

## **PRODUCING MULTIPLE TERRITORIALISATIONS FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN CORRIDOR PROJECT**

### **Mapping the territorialisation of the corridor: stakeholders' representations at work**

The representations of the Mediterranean corridor territory are changing from one stakeholder to another, as discourse analysis could show. To understand better how these multiple "corridor territories" are built in their minds, mapping is an interesting methodology. By representing the concrete elements of the territory on which stakeholders insist, we can draw maps representing "their" corridor as a structure formed by these elements.

The following series of maps is drawn by taking successively into account the priority elements enlightened in Table 1. First, political levels and parties are a determinant element, both because socio-democratic and conservative parties are strongly in opposition with a number of topics but seem to converge on the MRC project, and because the Mediterranean cities and regions are making it possible to focus on a common objective, despite the competition between them. Thus, the analysis of electoral results seems interesting to a better understanding of the balance of power at different scales. Second, the dynamism of the Mediterranean coast in terms of economy is strengthened by all the stakeholders who underline the importance of harbours, industry, agriculture and tourism, and of their European hinterland. Third, the coastal cities rank among the main Spanish metropolis (Barcelona is the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Valencia the 3<sup>rd</sup> city of Spain after Madrid) by their number of inhabitants). These three elements make it interesting to draw maps based on demographic, economic and industrial data in order to interrogate the real position of Mediterranean regions in Spain. Fourth, there is a huge movement of great urban planning projects in the Mediterranean cities, especially as far as transportation infrastructure is concerned, each of these cities are willing to join the narrow group of "European metropolises" by improving its connection to the network and promoting a metropolitan integration. Finally, to enhance the vision of the Spanish Mediterranean corridor project, it is interesting to map the different members of pro-MRC lobbies throughout Europe, in order to make evident the underlying institutional structure of the projects.

The following maps are set by picking in the aforesaid discourse the most important territorial elements listed hereabove and by identifying representative qualitative and quantitative data for mapping.

### *A changing territory depending on the adopted perspective*

The aim of these maps is to show different aspects of the Mediterranean axis actual situation, so as to represent different elements of coherence or structure. Therefore, they have no prospective goal and don't attempt to represent what the corridor could be (Debarbieux, 2002). Their interest lies mainly in understanding the different components of a Mediterranean complex situation as far as territorial organisation is concerned.



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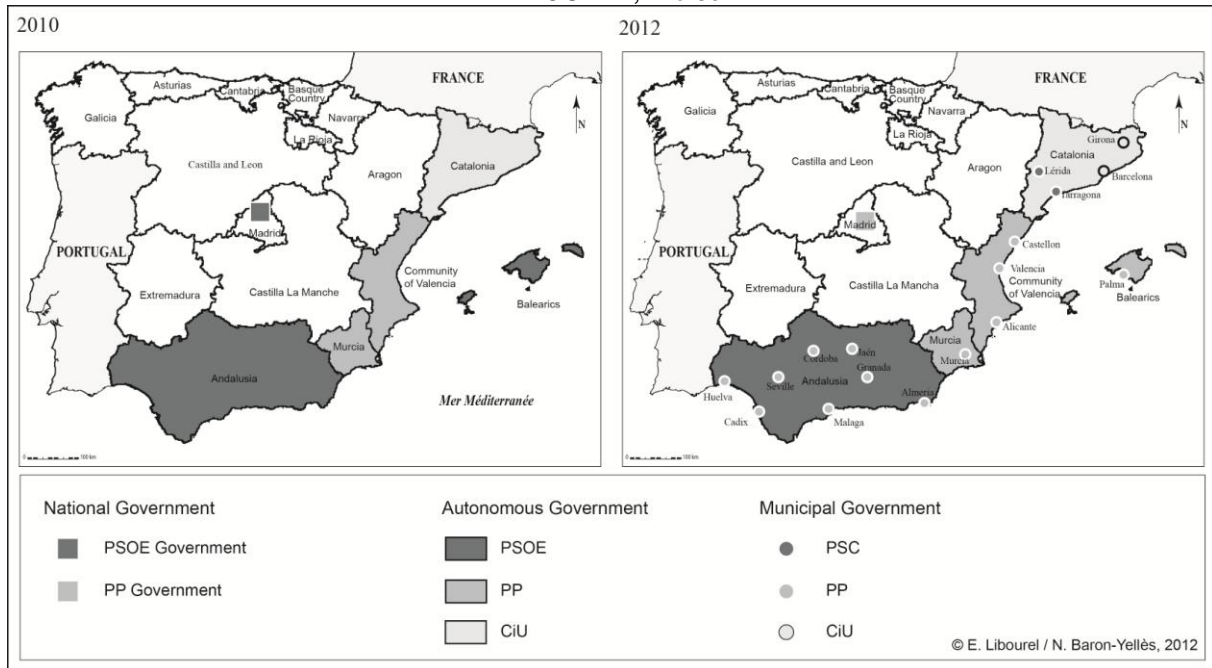


Figure 2 – The Mediterranean corridor as a political counter-nature alliance

The map of the political majorities in the Mediterranean regions and cities has to be interpreted in the context of a political change in Madrid. Even though the government changed, the priority given to high-speed rail reinforcement was kept. Until March 2012, Spain had a social-democratic government, supposed to be in opposition with the conservative autonomous government of Catalonia and Valencia. The election of Mariano Rajoy in 2012 could have improved the relationships between both scales of institutions.

Nevertheless, especially in the actual context of economic crisis, quite the contrary happened and the Minister of Transport and Public Works, Ana Pastor, eventually voted against the Mediterranean railway corridor project at the European Commission in Brussels. She did that in order to protest against the obligation to choose only one priority project per country, when she would have liked to register two corridors in the European prospective document: the MRC and a centre-Pyrenees corridor together.

The map also suggests that the coherent territory for a Mediterranean corridor from a political point of view would exclude Andalusia. It is true that this southern region, connected to Madrid by high-speed rail since 1992, is not as attached to the Mediterranean corridor as Catalonia and Valencia. Nevertheless, the reasons are less political than economic: as far as passenger and freight flows are concerned, the region is mainly oriented towards Madrid than towards the Mediterranean coast cities. If we consider the main cities, another point of view appears: almost all the important cities of the Mediterranean axis are governed by conservative mayors, which could theoretically make political cooperation easier, as demonstrated by the participation of almost all these cities in the pro-MRC lobbies. Moreover, a huge part of these cities are also dealing with great urban projects concerning infrastructure, as figure 5 shows.

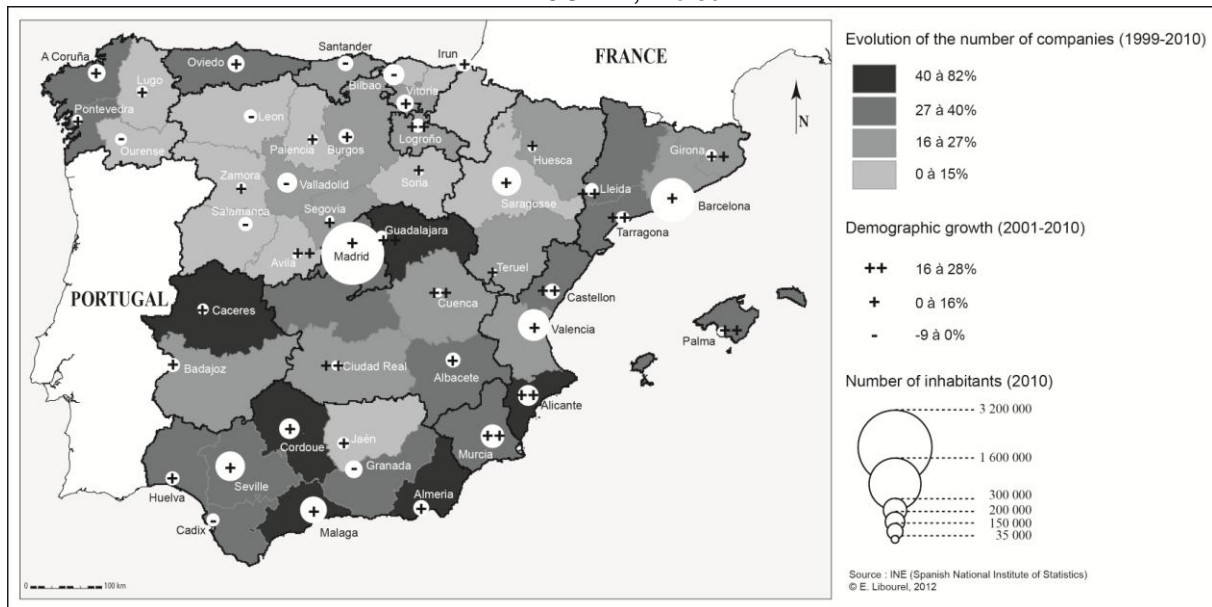


Figure 3 – The Mediterranean coast: an economically and demographically speaking dynamic corridor

From both economic and demographic point of view, the Mediterranean provinces (which are an infra-regional institutional perimeter in Spain) are very well dotted compared to the average: together with Madrid and its macro-region, they form the most dynamic Spanish axis, both economically and demographically speaking. In all the coastal provinces the number of companies increased more than 27% in the last decade. Almost all the coastal province capitals had a positive demographic growth in the same period, and half of them – especially intermediary cities – increased their population more than 16%.

This situation is an argument in favour of the MRC in stakeholders' liberal discourse of competitiveness: it appears as a coherent axis and as a centrality for Spanish development, even if it is geographically peripheral. This idea of a Mediterranean coherent and self-sufficient axis is quite contradictory with Madrid's – central government's – logics of providing territorial equity by linking the national capital to every province with high-speed rail services. At a regional level, Catalonia and Valencia are proudly attached to their dynamism as a counterweight to Madrid and as an autonomy argument. In the one hand, this economic and demographic propitious position is a factor of centrality in the country, despite the actual crisis which especially affected them since 2008, for these peripheral regions. Stakeholder's underline that there is a huge potential for economic recovery as soon as European situation gets better. On the other hand, the socio-economic situation also is an argument for nationalist discourse and even independency claiming in Catalonia: nationalist arguments lay on the idea that the crisis comes from a bad management of the national government, but that Mediterranean regions have a great deal of resources and a huge economic potential based on their strong industrial sector and on their powerful harbours, as shown in figure 4.

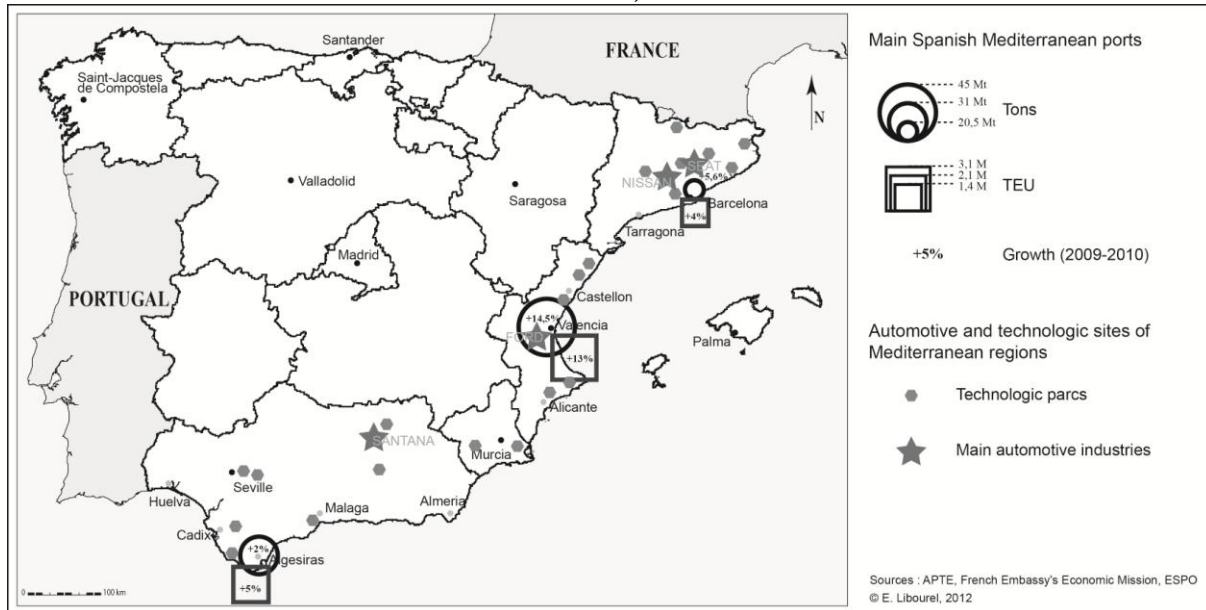


Figure 4 – Harbours and industries: towards a Mediterranean freight axis

In the Mediterranean regions, industries are quite well represented, in close relationship with harbours. This map especially focuses on the industrial frame of the four Mediterranean regions – Catalonia, Valencian Autonomous Community, Murcia Region and Andalusia. In this spatial framework, automotive industry is a very important productive sector and a leader of the integration to European consumer market, especially with Nissan and Ford factories respectively in Barcelona and Valencia. These industries are strongly linked to harbours for the import of spares and the export of cars mainly towards the European market. And yet these exportations could easily be made by railroad if the interconnection of the Spanish and French networks was completed. The Mediterranean regions are also developing technologic parks directly related to the harbours which could easily benefit from a freight railway corridor (Hall, McCalla, Comtois, Slack, 2010), but also of a high-speed rail axis as a factor of attractiveness for executive.

This structure of industry is for now very close to “hubs and spokes” model centred on three main harbour hubs (Barcelona, Valencia and Algeiras) and connected to very local or regional industries. It could shift to a corridor structure combining a few intermodal hubs with a powerful axis connected to Europe.

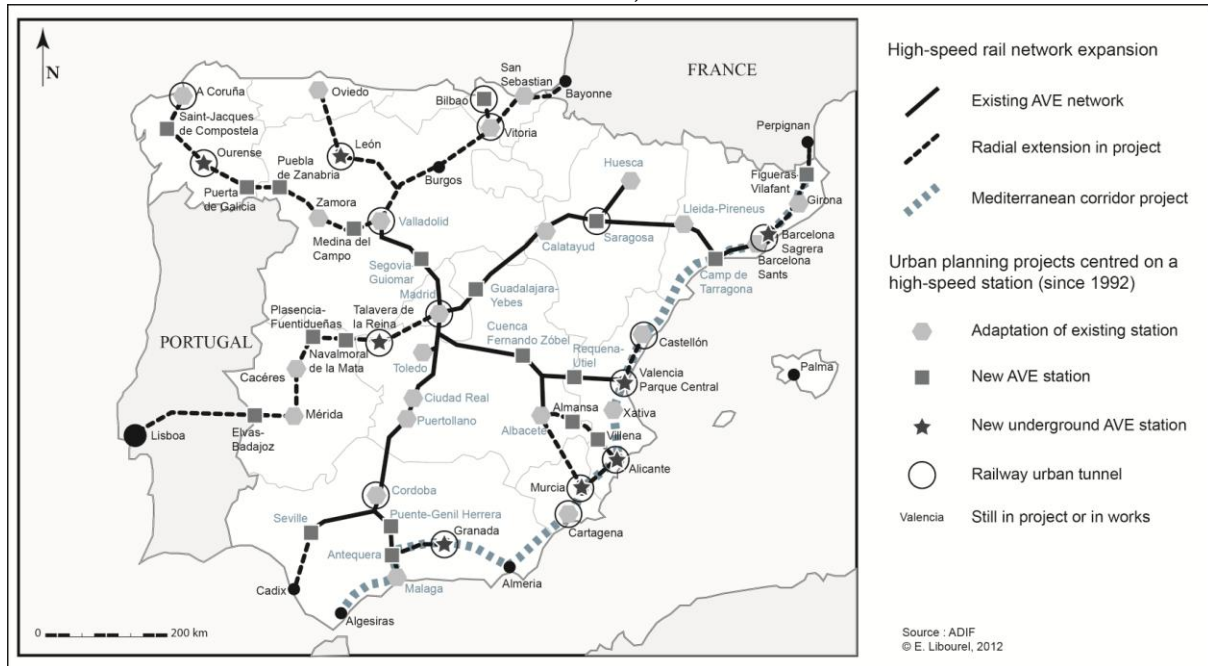


Figure 5 – Urban planning around stations claiming for the corridor

At a local scale, almost all the medium and large Mediterranean cities have great infrastructure projects strongly related to the MRC project. The main high-speed rail stations projects draw a geography of urban dynamism as far as this kind of equipment can be considered a factor of modernity and attractiveness. 22 of the 50 Spanish station projects are in the Mediterranean regions, mainly at the end of the new radial high-speed lines. In the cities which are trying to reach a nodal position with the MRC, a terminus situation on a one-way line to the capital seems unsatisfactory. These stations are symbolic elements of urban landscape, both as urban renewal opportunity and as metropolitan attribute (Bellet, Gutiérrez, 2011; Libourel, 2011).

Depending on the objectives of the city, three types of stations are planned. The adaptation of the existing station as a minimal operation consists of the creation of European gauge tracks and of a regulated access platform for the AVE (Spanish high-speed train). The creation of a brand new AVE station can be linked to the peripheral situation of the high-speed tracks, avoiding the centre and it can be considered as an opportunity of urban renewal for peripheral districts. Sometimes, this peripheral situation leads to infrastructure projects several kilometres far away from the centre, widely misconnected to the existing urban shape. Finally, the creation of an underground station, which generally speaking is not a technical necessity, seems to be an extreme case of urban symbolism (Baron, Libourel, 2013; Nas et al., 2011).

The infrastructure appears as a sign of the dynamism and importance of the city, giving it a metropolitan status. Barcelona-Sagrera and Valencia Parque Central are the most representative colossal underground projects (Libourel, 2012), and they are a model for Alicante, Murcia or Granada for instance, which had to put their projects of underground stations on hold because of the economic context.



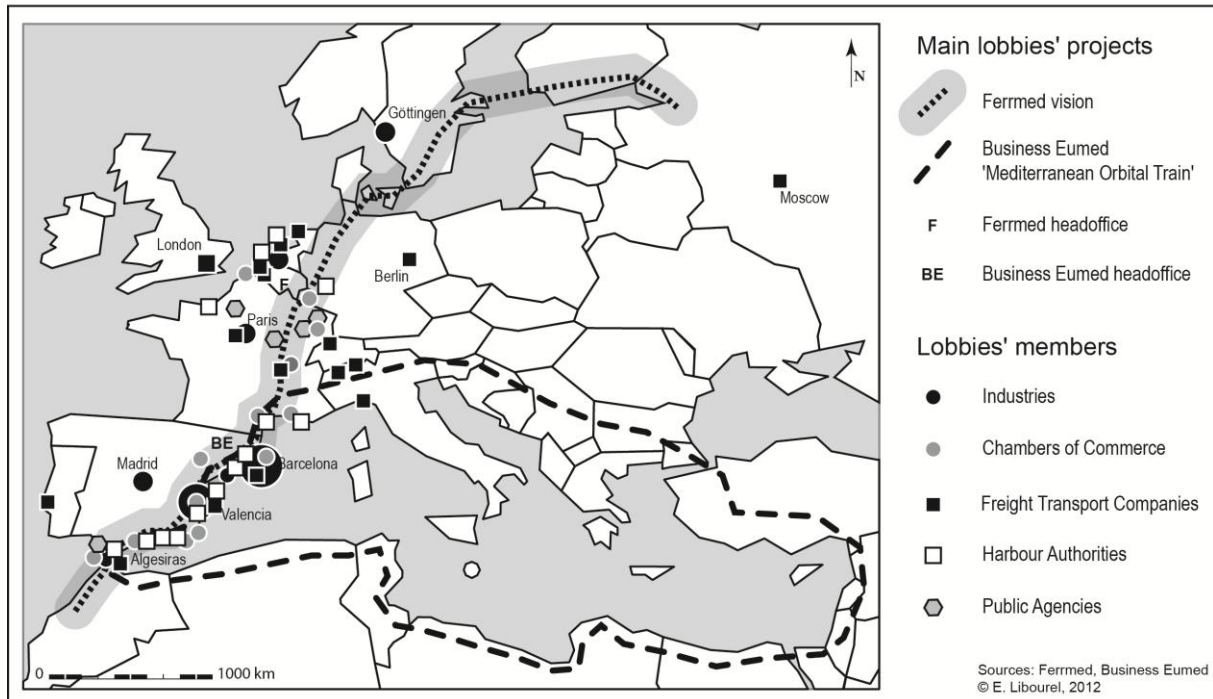


Figure 6 – Members of Ferrmed and Business Eumed: business lobbies with a political perspective for a great European corridor

All the Spanish cities claiming for the Mediterranean corridor are members of Ferrmed and/or Business Eumed, two business lobbies claiming for a better integration of the Mediterranean regions in the European economy and promoting various great projects of infrastructure and cooperation. The map of both main lobbies reveals transcontinental and circum-Mediterranean visions. The Spanish Mediterranean corridor is a central piece of two greater projects connected to European market and to Mediterranean countries. Both lobbies were born in Barcelona, even if Ferrmed chose Brussels as head office in order to affirm its European position. It also publishes socio-economic studies of the areas concerned by its projects and proposes technical reports about the possibilities of implementation of a transcontinental freight railroad (Ferrmed, 2009; Centre for Innovation in Transport, 2012). The map shows a major concentration of members on the Spanish coast, especially around Barcelona and Valencia as the main metropolises and around Gibraltar and the French border, the connections to Europe and North Africa, but also all along the Morocco-Saint-Petersburg corridor. This particular repartition of the members underlines the difference between the Ferrmed operative project, based on many intermediate cities, and the Business Eumed utopia which is presented as a general outlook or a representation to keep in mind and to think about, but not as a project which could be implemented and does not bring so many stakeholders together.

Mapping the priority elements evoked by the main stakeholders is a way to understand their representations of the Mediterranean corridor, characterised by a more or less institutional perimeter, variable length and continue or discontinue vision of the territory. This part of the study on the Mediterranean corridor leads to three main results. First, it allows an immediate, concrete and visual understanding of the situation of the Mediterranean regions in Spain and

of their socio-economic, industrial and political characteristics. Second, it gives an idea of the multiple visions of the Mediterranean corridor that can be elaborated based on the arguments presented in the discourse of stakeholders. This is the main focus point on which will be based our further analysis. Finally, from a methodological point of view, these maps present an operational result, as they are the first step of the elaboration of simplified schemes of the different ways of understanding the Mediterranean corridor territory according to the discourses analysed hereabove.

### *Changing geometry of the Mediterranean corridor*

Thanks to these preliminary maps drawn up to stakeholders' discourses, we can imagine what could be the different modalities of a "corridor territory" in the minds of different actors. By analysing the structuring elements of the series of maps, we propose to draw a series of schematic figures presenting some hypothesis of representation of the corridor, so as to make its different options very clearly legible and accessible, but to keep at the same time interpretative latitude. This should make of these figures a new research material, summarising the discourse analysis results and allowing to present them to new categories of actors in a second phase of interviews.

The method used here is quite the opposite of the mental maps method as far as their production is concerned: it is an interpretation of discourses, made by the researcher herself, and confronted to the actual socio-economic structures. It will be presented to interviewees so that they can react to the figures instead of asking them to draw their own mental map of the Mediterranean corridor.

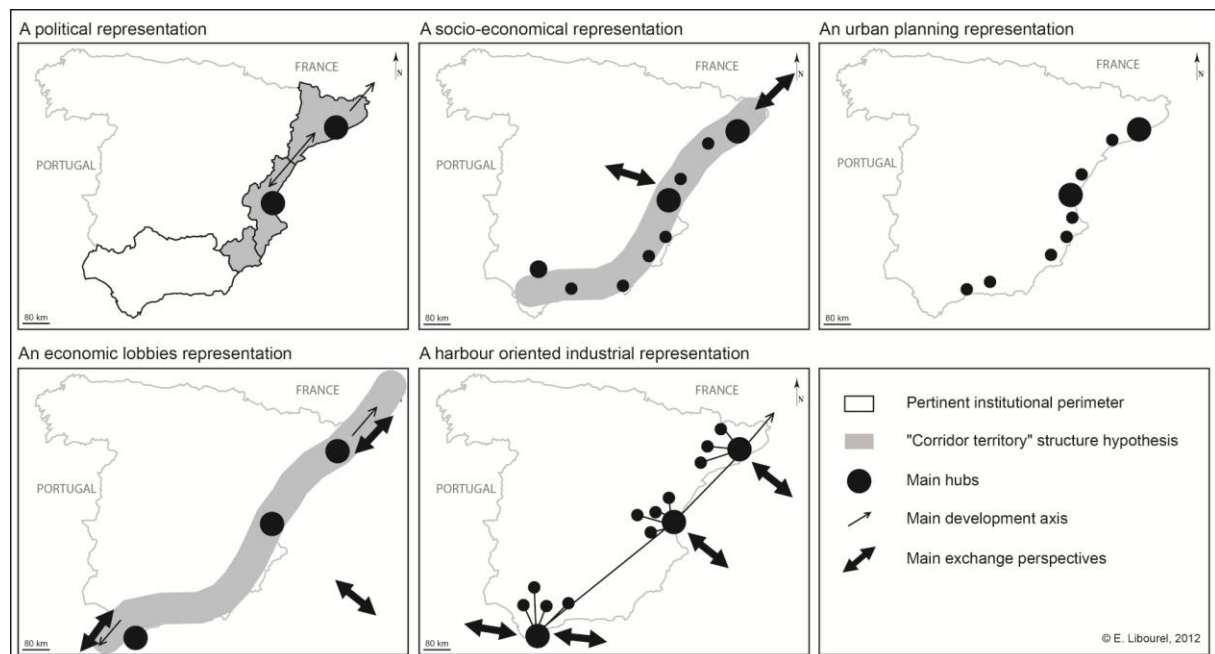


Figure 7 – Mapping hypothesis of a plural "corridor territory"

Schematic representations as these figures are far too minimalist to be capable to take into account all the pertinent elements and interactions creating a potential coherent territory, but they can be a powerful instrument for research. Moreover, other cartographic hypothesis

could actually be proposed by analysing other aspects of the corridor. With these figures, a few simple and clearly identified scenarios are drawn up and made visible, so that we can analyse the perspectives offered by the different hypothesis. These scenarios are as same as those which have been identified in the previous series of maps. Figure 7a draws a political option of the corridor territory, based on the regional borders and the political majorities. Figure 7b and 7c are the result of the two structures of a Mediterranean corridor territory based on economic and industrial data: in the first scheme, demographic and economic aspects show a strong physical link to the centre of Spain and Europe, whereas the second insists on the importance of the maritime foreland and of the connection of the main hubs. The urban planning great projects (figure 7d) lead to a representation based on a series of points along the coast, without a real coherence in the project. On the contrary, the corridor territory as seen by the lobbies is much more continuous because of the very numerous members and their frequent meetings to build a coherent action, centred on a few great metropolises and oriented towards the exportation options of Spanish economy (figure 7e).

### **Map analysis drawing a “corridor territory”? Findings from map hypothesis**

The mapping of the hypothesis of corridor territories reveals unexpected coalitions at both political and economical levels. Main factors emerging from almost all maps are the importance of harbour-cities and of great export industries. Commercial exchange is one of the most essential factors.

But intermediate and even small cities also have influence on political and planning levels: urban planning operations claiming for the corridor are quite significant from a socio-economic and even political point of view. They are also industrial poles, as Figure 4 demonstrates, which is contradictory with the idea that a passenger high-speed axis would be the only opportunity for these cities. They reveal the query of an existence as metropolises at European scale trough their presence in the Mediterranean corridor. These operations contribute to assure a certain continuity of the Mediterranean corridor territory despite its natural discontinuity of railway network.

Another important conclusion highlights the fact that there is no institutional pertinent perimeter for the Mediterranean corridor. The political representation is necessarily based on the Autonomous communities, but this institutional scale was not found in any other representation.

There are mainly two kinds of territory: a continuous axis of variable length incorporating every intermediate territory, or a discontinuous hubs and spokes territory based on the articulation of a few nodes in the network. These two visions are linked to two commitments which are not necessarily opposite even if they are quite different in the European territorial organisation tradition: either to promote a territorial balance trying to make every part of the country deriving benefit from the new equipment, or to consider competitiveness as the reinforcement of the main nodes to insert them in the global and continental flows.

Finally, one of the most interesting characteristics of these representations is that almost all of the representations are based on the idea of exchange and communication with Europe, with North Africa and with ports hinterlands and forelands, in a context of increasing road

transport costs and environmental concern and of European intermodal corridors policy, which makes railroad more attractive for freight.

## **Passing over the national frame**

With the exception of the national government, which acts mostly inside the limits of the national frame, all the stakeholders prefer a transnational vision of the Mediterranean railway corridor. Their representations of its territory are multiple, but they all take into account a European or even global scale as pertinent level for commerce, industry or political cooperation. At the same time, stakeholders act at a very local scale to implement urban infrastructures or to reinforce local productive sector. This simultaneous interest for both macro and micro scales leads to a process of “descalarizing”, namely a process which makes possible the emergence of a pertinent territory at different scales with different non-contradictory results in space. The example of the European Union Core Cities Conference, held in Barcelona on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2013 with the support of Ferrmed, shows how local interests and actors can face European scale topics and merge together to try to influence the decisions of the European Commission concerning transport corridors.

Thus, the “corridor territory” seems to take the form of a non-institutional macro-region at a European level and even at a Mediterranean level: it integrates several territories from other countries such as France and Morocco across Spanish borders, but also other economical and political territories from European consumer market or decision places. For instance, Ferrmed installed its head office in Brussels and the regional leaders of Catalonia and Valencia try to act directly at the European Commission (as the last Ferrmed meeting in the European Parliament building in March 2013 shows) and even at the OECD.

The notion of “corridor territory” in the case of the Mediterranean railway corridor must incorporate non-spatial dimensions and pass over the traditional institutional limits. National and regional borders are still important for institutional planning documents, but they are not relevant anymore to implement a great European infrastructure such as the Mediterranean railway corridor.

## **NEW “CORRIDOR TERRITORIES” AND THEIR POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON THE TEN-T PROJECT**

### **(Co)producing maps**

Exploring various representations of the territory made by different actors, this method can be compared to mental maps, but it is quite different because no stakeholder was asked to draw its own map. Moreover, mental maps, requiring an empirical knowledge of space, are usually handled about existing territories. Here, we try to clarify a prospective vision of a not-yet existing territoriality, with the tools of geographical analysis and cartography. But the limits of the production of this kind of maps (Monmonier, 1993) based on the analysis of discourse were underlined: they are not necessarily perfectly coherent with stakeholders’ real vision even if they are based on their discourse. They are a simple interpretation of these discourses or a set of hypothesis made by the researcher.



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These maps are neither prospective. They don't try to give an orientation for planning or a picture of how the future Mediterranean corridor could look like and be organised (Debarbieux, 2002). But it's interesting to draw these maps as a research instrument, because it allows us to see the different representations of the Mediterranean corridor which can be co-existing. These representations are the basis of the TEN-T project, inspired from national, regional and lobbying stakeholders' positions, and of the discussion on its concrete realisation.

To complete this approach, we plan to use these maps as a material for next interviews with the actors, so that they can react to this *a priori* vision and correct, complete or validate it. The multiplication of this experiment with several actors may show the similarities and differences of vision they can have into the same group of interest, and will allow us to confirm or to redefine our theoretical findings with empirical observations. This will be a way to modify existing prospective maps, as instruments for institutional decision, by taking into account different representations of the territory and different priority elements.

### **Territorial visions influencing the Mediterranean corridor project**

These maps echo the already existing ones, edited by some of the actors of the Mediterranean railway corridor project, for instance those of Ferrmed or Business Eumed lobbies, which are interesting to be analysed as executive projects, but moreover as representation instruments.

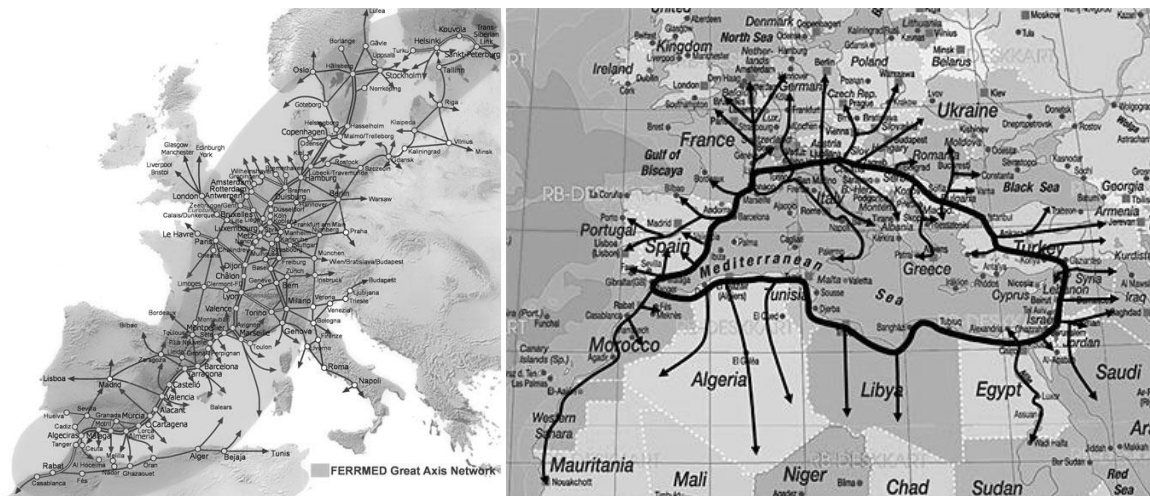


Figure 8 – The MRC as seen by Ferrmed (a) and Business Eumed (b) lobbies

Ferrmed map (figure 8a) represents a project as it was officially proposed to the European Commission (Ferrmed, 2009) together with impact and feasibility studies: it actually is an executive prospective map. Nevertheless, it is also an image of a structuring European corridor based on intermediate cities, which are the majority of the lobby. Thus, this map is both a proposal for European networks and the symptom of a synthesis of different stakeholders' interests. Business Eumed, a lobby of commerce and industry companies, presents a map of the "Mediterranean orbital train" (figure 8b) which, according to an interview with the director (Libourel, 2011), is mainly a representation to consider and keep in mind, and not a real executive project. The idea is to create a vision of a fuzzy territoriality

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around the Mediterranean to strengthen the cooperation between the Mediterranean companies for commerce and industry. Both lobbies were born in Catalonia, their Executive Secretary-General is the same person Joan Amorós, and they are members of each other.



Figure 9 – TEN-T project and Ministry of Transports plan map (*El País*)

The Spanish side of the TEN-T priorities proposes a very large vision of the Mediterranean corridor, which needs to be implemented up to local constraints and context. As it is a project excluding Madrid, its adoption was not self-evident in Spain, and other competing projects were discussed among which the centre-Pyrenean corridor (passing through the Pyrenees and arriving in France in a quite poorly connected space as far as railway is concerned). The political competition between these projects was so strong that the government tried to make both of them to be considered among TEN-T priorities, and that Ana Pastor, actual Minister of Transport, voted against the Mediterranean project at the European Commission to protest against the decision of keeping only one project per country in the priority network.

Government successive projects (Ministerio de Fomento, 2004, 2010, 2012) have been modified under the pressure of different lobbies and stakeholders, and by the constraints of the economic crisis, coming down of budget from 53 to 1.3 billion Euros and from two high-speed tracks plus two European gauge freight tracks to a single third rail for passengers and a one-track European gauge freight railway. But even if the crisis leads to a reduction of the investments, the Mediterranean corridor still appears as a factor to raise the regional economy and to promote the European cohesion.

The Mediterranean corridor was in the TEN-T since its very beginning in 1996, but its practical modalities were changed many times. The analysis of the evolution of the projects, comparing them with the different visions of the corridor drawn on the maps are interesting to understand how stakeholders can influence European projects.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis explores an approach on the territorialisation of the Mediterranean corridor based on the analysis of planning documents and stakeholders' discourses in the media and interviews. The information given in the discourses is compared to the reality of the territory in socio-economic and political terms through a series of maps representing the main statistical and planning data evoked by the stakeholders themselves. Thanks to this first step, this research led to the drawing of a second set of very schematic maps presenting the outlines of what could be the representations of the Mediterranean corridor project territoriality. These schemes are a new material produced to be the basis of a second phase of interviews around the question of the creation of a Mediterranean scale coherent territory. They highlight the importance of a multi-scalar approach passing over the institutional limits and national borders, towards the creation of plural macro-regional territories with European magnitude and local realisations, and with spatial and non-spatial dimensions.

Methodologically speaking, this paper proposes the use of mapping as an instrument to show up hypothesis and present them to the stakeholders in the interviews of an oncoming fieldwork. The main idea is to replace part of the questions about the possible corridor territories by a dialogue around the figures, and to allow the different actors to comment them, to give their own interpretation of them (which supposes very simple graphics) and even to complete or correct them.

This work aims to show the processes of construction of the Mediterranean railway corridor as a coherent network territory. It leads to a reflexion on the application of continental scale political decisions at a local level, which is a recurrent question as far as planning is concerned, especially in Europe, through the very actual example of the Spanish Mediterranean coast. Therefore a comparison with other European case studies would be interesting to lead to a practical research application about the way in which European Commission could take into account this kind of processes.

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